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TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF SJ23

My name is Carol McEvoy and I am Executive Director of the Rim Country Land Institute. I served on the steering committee for the recent Summit on Children and Nature which attracted 300 people from around our state to learn about saving our children from what Richard Louv calls Nature Deficit Disorder and to seek remedies to the problems it causes.

But I come here today as a parent, grandparent and a family therapist who practices here in the Helena area. In my private practice since 1986, I have witnessed the impact of a disconnect from Nature on children, their families and even their communities and the problems created by such a disconnect have made their way to my office, showing up as a decreased capacity for critical thinking, loss of imagination and creativity and for some children, an abiding sense of hopelessness and depression. It has been my privilege as well to witness the healing effect of Nature for my clients. A walk in the woods among wild flowers or even a chance to groom a horse could do more for a grieving childor adult.....than long hours of talk therapy.

I am personally and professionally delighted that this resolution is being heard today. The resolution itself is informative enough. What I would like to bring to this hearing is the words of a very young poet who captures the essence of this resolution. Her words say it all

Sunrise in the Forest

The gentle spirit of a new sunrise
Brings yellow and pink, then soft blue skies
Shapes of redwoods and delicate ferns
Emerge from the darkness as daylight returns
Shadows in the forest dance with delight
Sparkling dewdrops reflect the light
Piercing rays add a magic glow
Birds sing praise at the wondrous show
In the simple grace of her effortless way
Our Mother Earth unfolds the day
A rising mist wanders and drifts
Like a pillowy blanket that gently lifts
The rich brown earth slowly appears
With patches of moss, moist with tears
From the joy of sharing this sacred space
With rainbow flowers that color her face
In the stillness and beauty she whispers a dream

Come walk in my forest, swim in my stream
Show me, my children, your beautiful smiles
Heal with me as you wander for miles
Follow a path that calls you this day
Let my tiniest creatures show you the way
Take this moment to shed every care
Enjoy a breath of cool fresh air
Carry this peace in the silence within
And remember that you may return here again
Whenever your heart needs to feel like new
The sun will be rising in the forest for you

Rawan Bardini, Age 13

. I hope that Montana can embrace the importance of offering experiences like this for all our state's children and for their families and communities as well.

I thank you, Senator Moss for sponsoring this resolution and I urge its acceptance and passage by this committee.

Thank you
